

Whereas the Nation owes a debt of gratitude to John McCain and all of these patriots for their courage and exemplary service: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses its gratitude for, and calls upon all Americans to reflect upon and show their gratitude for, the courage and sacrifice of John McCain and the brave men who were held as prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict, particularly on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Operation Homecoming, and the return to the United States of Senator John McCain,

(2) acting on behalf of all Americans—

(A) will not forget that more than 2,000 members of the United States Armed Forces remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict; and

(B) will continue to press for the fullest possible accounting for such members.

Mr. WARNER. Parliamentary inquiry. Is it in order to ask to be an original cosponsor of the resolution?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. I thank the Chair.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

PROTOCOLS TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY OF 1949 ON ACCESSION OF POLAND, HUNGARY, AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, peace and stability in Europe are among America's most vital security interests. In support of these interests, NATO has been the cornerstone of American leadership in Europe and the foundation for security and peace on that continent.

The Alliance serves the transatlantic community not only as a proven deterrent against aggression, but also as an unmatched instrument of integration and trust—two key pillars of peace and stability. Through NATO, old enemies have not only been reconciled, but now stand side by side as allies; national defense policies are coordinated between nations that half a century ago were at war; and, on a day to day basis, consultation, joint planning, joint training and cooperation between these countries reinforce the trust and commitment to the shared values that underpin this alliance of democracies.

Nearly a decade ago, "velvet revolutions" championed by the likes of Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel renewed freedom in Central Europe. These remarkable and peaceful revolutions tore down the Iron Curtain that divided the continent and provided the basis upon which democracy is now flourishing.

Today, nearly a decade after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, we begin formal consideration of a resolution of ratification that would extend NATO membership to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Few votes before the Senate have as much far-reaching significance as this.

This vote concerns not only the integration of these three democracies into the Alliance, it is also very much about the strategic relationship between the United States and Europe. It is about

America's role in Europe and the ability of the transatlantic community to respond to challenges of the future—both of which hinge on whether the United States wishes to remain a European power and whether we desire a unified, democratic, and larger Europe to remain linked to America.

The case I would like to make today is that NATO enlargement is consistent with the moral and strategic imperatives of the Euro-Atlantic relationship. It is central to the vitality of the transatlantic community, to the future of a stable and peaceful Europe and, thus, to the ability of America and Europe to work together effectively in promoting common interests in the 21st century.

Inclusion of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary into the Alliance will strengthen NATO. It will make NATO militarily more capable and Europe more secure. These three democracies have demonstrated their commitment to the values and interests shared by NATO members: human rights, equal justice under the law, and free markets. Each has a growing economy and a military under civilian control.

It is important to note that they also contributed forces to Operation Desert Storm, as well as to our peacekeeping missions in Haiti and Bosnia. They were among the first countries to commit forces to serve side by side with the United States in the stand-off against Saddam Hussein. The admission of these three democracies will add an additional 200,000 troops to the Alliance, thereby strengthening its ability to fulfill its core mission of collective defense.

NATO enlargement will eliminate immoral and destabilizing lines in Europe, a division established by Stalin and perpetuated by the Cold War. The extension of NATO membership to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary is an imperative consistent with the moral underpinning of U.S. foreign policy and the North Atlantic Treaty that established the Alliance in 1949. Indeed, Article 10 of the Treaty states that membership is open to "any other European state in a position to further the principles of this treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area."

Mr. President, this powerful statement reflects the emphasis the Alliance places on democracy and inclusivity.

But NATO enlargement is not driven just by moral imperatives. It is also a policy rooted in strategic self-interest and driven by objective political, economic, and military criteria.

Indeed, for these reasons, NATO has expanded three times since its founding, and continued enlargement will expand the zone of peace, democracy, and stability in Europe. This benefits all countries in Europe, including a democratizing Russia.

Throughout its history, Europe has been a landscape of many insecure

small powers, a few imperialistic great powers, and too many conflicting nationalist policies, each creating friction with the other. Twice in this century, these dynamics pulled America into wars on the European continent. They contributed directly to a prolonged Cold War. And the potential for them to create conflict in the future is all too real unless we seize opportunities like the one before us. As Vaclav Havel put it, "If the West does not stabilize the East, the East will destabilize the West." Every time America has withdrawn its influence from Europe, trouble has followed. This we cannot afford.

Mr. President, NATO enlargement is the surest means of doing for Central and Eastern Europe what American leadership, through the Alliance, has done so well for Western Europe. This includes promoting and institutionalizing trust, cooperation, coordination, and communication. In this way, NATO enlargement is not an act of altruism, but one of self-interest.

Allow me to reemphasize that NATO enlargement benefits all democracies in Europe, including Russia. I say this because there are still those who assert that NATO enlargement is a policy that mistreats Moscow, thereby repeating mistakes made in the Versailles Treaty. That argument is dead wrong. It ignores the hand of partnership and assistance that the West, including NATO, has extended Russia. Last May, the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed, providing the foundation for not only enhanced consultation, but also unprecedented defense cooperation. Today, Russian troops serve with NATO forces in Bosnia. And, unlike the punishing economic retribution carried out under the Versailles regime, the West has extended some \$100 billion since 1991 to help Russia's democratic and economic reforms, including over \$2 billion in weapon dismantlement and security assistance.

Others suggest NATO enlargement endangers a positive relationship between Russia and the West. The United States and its NATO allies will not always share common interests with Russia, irrespective of NATO enlargement. Differences over Iraq, Iran, the Caucasus, arms sales, and religious freedom are not related to NATO enlargement. Moscow will always have its own independent motivations. Unfortunately, there are still those in Moscow who reject NATO enlargement out of a desire to preserve Russia's sphere of influence. Let us not give credibility to the likes of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy by acceding to these demands.

As I have written with my colleague Senator LUGAR, the bottom line is that if Russia cannot accept the legitimate right of its neighbors to choose their own defensive security arrangements, then NATO's role in Central and Eastern Europe is even more important.

Keeping the above arguments in mind, it follows that the costs of enlargement are insignificant to the

costs of rejecting NATO enlargement. I urge my colleagues to consider three severe costs that would be incurred should the Senate fail to ratify NATO membership for Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary:

A rejection of NATO enlargement would prompt a massive crisis in America's role as the leader of the transatlantic community. NATO enlargement is a policy that has been championed by the United States, including the United States Senate. Rejection of the resolution before us would vindicate those in Europe who express doubt and who resent U.S. leadership.

Rejection of this resolution would spread massive disillusionment across Central Europe. It would stimulate a pervasive feeling of abandonment and rekindle a sense of historic despair. This could prompt political crises. It would surely prompt a turn to more nationalist policies—including nationalist defense policies. A rejection of enlargement would reverse the remarkable development of European security around an Alliance-determined agenda—a development in no small way facilitated by the process of NATO enlargement.

Rejection of this resolution would undercut Russia's democratic evolution, stimulating Russian imperialist nostalgia. It would give great credibility to those in Russia who argue that Russia is entitled to a sphere of influence in Central Europe. That would be at the expense of those who desire Moscow to focus on the priorities of economic and political reform.

NATO enlargement is a critical, non-threatening complement to the hand of partnership that the West and NATO have extended to Russia. It ensures the secure and stable regional context in which a democratic Russia will have the best prospects for a normal, cooperative relationship with its European neighbors.

Indeed, there would have been no German-French reconciliation without NATO. And, the ongoing German-Polish reconciliation would not be possible without NATO. In fact, as one thoughtful thinker on these matters, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, has written "with NATO enlarged, a genuine reconciliation between former Soviet satellites and Russia will be both truly possible and likely."

Finally, Mr. President, NATO enlargement is fundamental to Europe's evolution into a partner that will more effectively meet global challenges before the transatlantic community. An undivided Europe at peace is a Europe that will be better able to look outward, a Europe better able to join with the United States to address necessary global security concerns. A partnership with an undivided Europe in the time- and stress-tested architecture of NATO will enable the United States to more effectively meet the global challenges to its vital interests at a time when defense resources are increasingly strained.

Mr. President, allow me to close by pointing out that NATO enlargement is a policy validated by unprecedented public and Congressional discourse on a matter of national security.

Over the last five years, NATO enlargement has been the topic of countless editorials and opinion pieces in national and local papers. Over the last two years some fourteen states, including the First State, Delaware, have passed resolutions endorsing NATO enlargement. This policy has been endorsed by countless civic, public policy, political, business, labor and veterans organizations.

NATO enlargement has also been repeatedly endorsed by the North Atlantic Assembly, an arm of the Alliance that convenes parliamentary representatives of NATO's sixteen countries. Congress has always been an active player in this organization and I have the honor today of serving as President of the NAA.

Congress, in particular, has led the charge for NATO enlargement. Its committees have examined in detail the military, intelligence, foreign policy, and budgetary implications of this long overdue initiative. Since last July alone, twelve hearings have been conducted on NATO enlargement by the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Appropriations, and Budget. The Senate NATO Observer Group, which I chair with Senator JOSEPH R. BIDEN, has convened seventeen times with, among others, the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, NATO's Secretary General, and the leaders of the three invitee countries.

For me, it is no surprise—indeed a matter of pride—that Congress has legislatively promoted NATO enlargement every year since 1994. To be exact, this chamber has endorsed NATO enlargement some fourteen times through unanimous consent agreements, voice votes and roll call votes. I only wish all dimensions of U.S. national security policy would receive this much public attention and endorsement.

Mr. President, these arguments make it clear that America's best chance for enduring peace and stability in Europe—our best chance for staying out of war in Europe, our best chance for reinforcing what has been a strong, productive partnership with Europe—is to promote a Europe that is whole, free, and secure. What better organization to do this than the North Atlantic Alliance—an organization that has kept the peace for more than fifty years and remains unmatched in its potential to meet the security challenges of the future. The extension of NATO membership to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary is a critical step to ensure that the Alliance remains true to the values of the Washington Treaty, to consolidate the gains in democracy, peace, and stability in post-Cold War Europe, and to ensure that the transatlantic community is fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the next century.

Mr. President, we should all commend the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator JESSE HELMS, for producing an outstanding resolution and ratification. He has been a true leader in the effort behind NATO enlargement. He has ensured that all Members of the Senate have had ample opportunity to be fully engaged on this important matter. I applaud his leadership. Senator HELMS and his colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee have produced, as I said, an outstanding resolution of ratification. I urge my colleagues to give it their unqualified support.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANTORUM). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent there be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, it was just over two years ago—on Friday, February 23, 1996—that the federal debt broke the five trillion dollar sound barrier for the first time in history. The records show that on that day, at the close of business, the debt stood at \$5,017,056,630,040.53.

Just 22 years ago, in 1976, the federal debt stood at \$629 billion—and that was after the first 200 years of America's history had elapsed, including two world wars. Then the big spenders really went to work and the interest on the federal debt really began to take off—and, presto, during the past two decades the federal debt has soared into the stratosphere, increasing by more than \$4 trillion in two decades (from 1976 to 1996).

So, Mr. President, as of the close of business Monday, March 16, 1998, the federal debt stood—down-to-the-penny—at \$5,530,456,190,863.05.

This enormous debt is a festering, escalating burden on all citizens and especially it is jeopardizing the liberty of our children and grandchildren. As Jefferson once warned, "to preserve [our] independence, we must not let our leaders load us with perpetual debt. We must make our election between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude."

Was Mr. Jefferson right, or what?